

















*First Published, February 1945*  
*Fifth Edition, August 1945*

**COPYRIGHT**

PRINTED BY M. E. KARIM AT DE LUX PRINTERS, VICTORIA  
GARDEN ROAD, BYCULLA, BOMBAY, 27; AND PUBLISHED BY  
V. KULKARNI, HIND KITABS, 267 HORNEY ROAD, BOMBAY

## FOREWORD

There can be no more useful work, to my thinking, than the promotion of comprehension and goodwill among the various peoples of the world. Beverley Nichols (and others) may ask why I should find it necessary to publish, instead of merely posting, this my letter to him. While my reasons for so doing are several, the one best qualified to serve as a reply, and to satisfy as such, is that it was only by publication that I could at all hope to undo even a little of the harm that Beverley Nichols' *Verdict on India* must have done to the cause of those who are seeking to establish a better understanding between the East and the West. Many will doubtless argue that the opinions expressed by a man to whom 'civilization' (to judge from at least *one* of his paragraphs in the 'Verdict') can, apparently, be declared present where there are 'pretty women in gay dresses' and 'a smart little orchestra' playing jazz, and absent where these are not, matter very little either way to the cause of world understanding.....but I cannot agree with them. Prolific as England is as a literary country, few, if any, are the India-returned Englishmen who give the public any really worthwhile information on the subject of this vast and intensely interesting country. The more reason therefore, most unfortunately, for Beverley Nichols' book to be avidly read.

Though I imagine that most of those who read the 'Verdict' carefully will realize that not many of its

dogmatic statements are to be taken too seriously — there yet remain the tens of thousands who, either from lack of interest in a particular passage or for want of time, may merely dip into the book here and there and receive (being perhaps, on the subject of India, woefully ignorant, as are all too many of us) some exceedingly wrong and most harmful impressions.

An enthusiastic and indefatigable tourist in many lands, Beverley Nichols appears, on the whole, to have been either very unfortunate in the impressions he has received or very hard to please — and much of what he has said (in his earlier books) about certain countries cannot fail to have irritated those who like, love, or admire those countries or their peoples. But all of us are entitled to our opinions — even though it is often just as well to exercise a little more prudence than does Beverley in our expression of the same — and up till now he has been guilty of nothing more blameworthy than excess of vehemence, perhaps, in the declaration of his likes and dislikes. The 'Verdict', however, introduces us to a new and dangerous Beverley.....one who by his distortion of facts and perversion of the truth can do untold harm among those who happen to read his book too carelessly to take full note of its discrepancies. It is with the hope of reaching these that I think the publication of this letter not only useful but necessary.

Gertrude Murray

Dear Beverley Nichols

There is very much in your quite interesting book — *Verdict on India* — which is true, and several things that are worthy of note, while publication took place at the moment when the demand for such a book was at its highest.....but it has left most of us more than a little disappointed and — most justifiably, I think — more than a little irritated. For there are few things more irritating than the man who indignantly points out the mote in his brother's eye, whilst quite oblivious of the simply staggering beam in his own .....and of this peculiarly aggravating type you are really, please allow me to say so, a most outstanding example. I feel and trust that you will be willing to consider and weigh this criticism of your work, coming as it does from a fellow-countrywoman who is also well entitled to speak on the fascinating subject of India — having, as an evacuee, come to these shores over four years ago, during the whole of which period she has not only enjoyed Indian courtesy, India's boundless hospitality and Indian kindness, but also numbers many very dear and close friends, and a vast number of friendly acquaintances among the most widely different Indian communities : Hindus of all castes, Muslims in all their various ramifications, Parsees, Christians ( of various and widely differing sects ), Sikhs, Bengalis, Malayalees, Tamilians, Nepalis, Goans, Punjabis, to name some...

When I speak of your not perceiving in yourself the defect you so dislike and deride in others, I allude to your *inconsistency*, and to your habit of making incorrect statements, in the condemning of which faults in others ( especially

when alluding to Mahatma Gandhi ) you often seem to become positively furious. Whether you are right or not, in thus labelling the Mahatma's actions and pronouncements, belongs to the field of politics, into which I have no wish to enter, at least for the present — all I wish to point out is that you are often unpardonably inconsistent and inaccurate yourself throughout the whole of your book.....which is rather a drawback in one seeking not only to deliver anything so high-sounding as a 'Verdict' but also ( as I presume, in writing your book, you were ) endeavouring to open the eyes of at least some millions of one's fellow-men on matters of world import.

There is also that annoying habit of yours of accepting blindly, without any attempt to find out if they are true, the wildest tales that people chance to tell you — and then of passing them on to others as 'news'.

The absurdity of your self-contradictions is often so great that one is led to debate whether there be any truth at all, even in your most reasonable-seeming statements — and it is since I imagine that you wish your book to be taken seriously and not as a mere light, and occasionally comic, reading for idle hours, that I suggest you give due consideration to my criticism.

A. The very first sentence in your Foreword, in fact, is sufficiently startling — especially after one has read to the end of the brief paragraph it opens. You say that your book is the record of a year's intensive study — *intensive study*, presumably, according to the closing sentence of the paragraph, of, among other things, Indian *art* and *music* !

Well, after re-reading your own book (please do, if you haven't), doesn't the claim sound, even to you, far-fetched to the point of absurdity?

**B.** Then, further down on the same page, you protest regarding Mr B. G. Horniman's joking allusion to your being a possible choice of Government for the post of Viceroy (*Bombay Sentinel*, 5th May, 1943). I should not have supposed it possible (nor, I think, would anyone else) for a member of even one of the most humourless nations to take *that* seriously — and I am sure that nobody in India did do so, except your serious-minded self. The British, as all who know them well will surely agree, have a very pronounced sense of humour and, above all, the precious and rare faculty of being able to see and enjoy a joke against themselves — which makes *your* inability to do so the more surprising. It is, I suppose, this faculty in particular which makes the delightfully witty '*Sentinel*' (unfortunately unappreciated by you) so popular with the humorous-minded and laughter-loving British Tommies in India. Your failure to appreciate a joke, of course, cannot be classed as a self-contradiction or an inconsistency — but coming as it does on the very *first* page of your *Foreword*, it certainly prejudices one from the outset against your statements regarding *other* things, whether humorous or otherwise, on India.

**C.** As regards your views on Parsees, they too have given many of us a shock, especially when you speak of them as being almost the *only* patrons of art in India. Heroic, outstanding pioneers are not to be taken as typical of a

community as a whole — rather, their brilliance but serves to show up the denseness of the shadows around them. An exquisite dancer like Shirin Vazifdar, a consummate violinist such as Mehli Mehta, must never be taken as *typical Parsees*, nor are their throngs of admirers anything like predominantly Parsee.

Not that I wish to deny the existence of enthusiastic Parsee patrons of art — it would be foolish, but if, as you would have your readers believe, they were the *only* patrons of art in India — of what manner of persons are composed the vast numbers who flock, all over India, to every really good recital of Indian dancing or music? Clearly these people are not admitted free of charge into the theatres...and if an artist's most important patrons be not those who pay to witness a recital of his art, who *are*? As for painting, one sees every community represented among the public at art exhibitions — and I have never noted the Parsee element to be predominant among them.

You also say that Indians deny Parsees the title of Indians, calling them instead — Persians, and saying that they always have been, and always will be, Persians. After four years of life in India I can say that while I have never heard any such thing said of Parsees, I have heard such statements made by Parsees themselves — to the great irritation of their Indian brothers.

With all this I do not forget the great kindness, generosity and loyalty of my many Parsee friends and hope that my words will not give them offence. I owe a consider-

rable debt of gratitude to Parsees — only I cannot be patient when I hear what I consider nonsense talked about them.

D. As for some of the things you say about Indian Christians, I think that your Christian friend, who told you that he had received a broken head in Church, must have been pulling your leg.

As your friend had been, you say, *to Mass*, I must conclude he was a Roman Catholic — yet you speak of the Communion cup which, as your friend related, caused so much havoc that morning through being handed to a woman of low caste, thereby infuriating a man of higher caste who was to receive it after her. You describe a truly horrible scene in which blood and wine are mingled on the floor in a hideous battle between the low-caste partisans of the woman and the higher-caste partisans of the man — both of whom were now Christians, either converted from Hinduism, or descendants of Hindus thus converted. May I point out that the practice of giving sacramental wine to the public was abolished by the Roman Catholic Church many centuries ago? Yet you go on to say that such scenes *occur all over India in every Christian Church!* Well, speaking as a Roman Catholic, I can say that during my four years in India I have never witnessed any such scene — nor heard of any, either in a Roman Catholic or any other Christian Church. In a Roman Catholic Church such a thing would, in any case, be impossible — sacramental wine, as I have already stated, being given to the Roman Catholic faithful neither during the Mass nor at any other time.

In every country there are people who get an enormous

amount of fun, it seems, out of telling the greatest balderdash to tourists who, it must be admitted, are often unbelievably gullible. On the subject of India, especially, no tale is too absurd to be swallowed by the victims of this kind of joker. Among the many instances that I could name, the three following are perhaps among the more ridiculous :

1. A European lady invited to a banquet given by an Indian Muslim Prince, related to a fellow-countrywoman that, even though she had taken the smallest portion of food possible, she had yet suffered agonies of nausea, knowing as she did, that every dish, without exception, contained cow's excrements. Her friend laughed and asked from where the poor lady had got such a wild idea. The unhappy lady protested that she had it on good authority, for, 'as you know, the Indians worship cows.' 'But His Highness is a Muslim,' protested the friend, 'how can you say that he worships cows? — and even if he did, I hardly...' — but the lady shook her head, unpersuaded — 'These Indians are all the same,' she sighed.

2. A wag, having been asked by an innocent old European gentleman the meaning of the sacred thread worn by Parsees replied jokingly that it served to catch lice. The pests collected, throughout the day, about the thread which was cleansed of them in the evening and replaced to collect more for the morrow. The old gentleman, ready and most willing to believe even wilder (if such be possible) stories about India, now relates this wondrous piece of information religiously to all newly arrived Europeans whom he happens to encounter.

3. Yet another credulous old soul is firmly convinced that Indian Jews devour Christian babies which they kidnap and secretly massacre. The tale was told him by a Jewish acquaintance whose sense of humour was evidently of a macabre variety — but, as the poor victim of his wit pathetically insists — ‘It is true, for one of the fellows *confessed it to me himself!*’!

E. As for what you say about the appalling shortage of hospital nurses in India — *and that we can do nothing about it on account of Indian prejudice regarding the profession*, I think you can have paid but little attention either to the conditions under which nurses are expected to live in India, or to the incredibly low salaries which they receive. For a niggardly sum, which is often less than a servant’s pay, food (in many cases) from which a beast would turn in loathing, and cramped, wretched, stifling quarters, young Indian girls are expected to perform the hard, distasteful, never-ending tasks of a hospital nurse, not only in Indian hospitals, but also in the many which are run by American and European Missionary Societies here who are surely able to do something ‘about it’. In fact, conditions for the nurses are often far worse in these establishments than elsewhere in India. In one such hospital, while the *Indian nurses* are paid but Rs. 35 per month (out of which deductions are made for rent, lighting and Church fund, not to speak of the money spent by the unfortunate girls in eking out their wretched diet), the *American Sister* receives a salary of Rs. 350 and is housed, rent free, in a commodious bungalow entirely for her own use, in ridiculous

contrast to the cramped and miserable quarters of the nurses, which lack even hygiene. Such cases only go to show that, in such establishments necessary funds for the needs of the staff are not lacking, and that the missionary authorities in charge of the institute are not so spartan as not to comprehend the meaning of comfort when it is a question of housing their own countrywomen.

Many modern-minded Indian girls of my acquaintance would be only too willing to adopt a nursing career if they were assured of adequate treatment and even passable food.

F. As regards your attack on Hindu religion, though as a Christian, I naturally feel the supremacy of the doctrines of Christ, I am not blind to the beauties of other religions. Though Hinduism contains so much that to Christian eyes must seem purely fantastic, that is the case with all religions when casually glanced at by adherents of other creeds — and you appear to have been unusually unfortunate in your glances. If asked to speak at random of anything connected with Hindu mythology, I think my thoughts would probably fly to the mighty conception of Shiva, the Lord of the Dance, the ceaseless and perfect rhythm of whose eternally dancing limbs is the eternal rhythm of all the suns, moons, and stars of the universe...or to the exquisite story of how Parvati, Shiva's spouse, she who incarnates half of his form, playfully crept up behind her Lord one day and placed her hands, in mischief, over his eyes, thereby shutting out all light from the world. Whereupon the mercy of Shiva, which would not leave his creatures deprived of light, yet forbore to repulse the loving caress of the goddess, caused a third

eye, like a luminous sun, to burst open in the centre of his forehead.

Since you find symbolism 'of the utmost consequence' in religion, would it not have been better to seek a little farther until you perhaps came across some of Hinduism's many beautiful and profoundly significant symbolic legends, such as the above, before condemning all Hindu belief as a 'hotch-potch of fears, dreams and delusions', and briefly dismissing the god Shiva, as 'Shiva of the dreadful face'? Even if one takes your advice and avoids the slightest comparison of Hinduism with Christianity, one may still be very far from making the mistake of condemning all Hindu legends as a lot of ugly, nonsensical fairy-tales. Not being a Hindu myself, I have no reason to defend Hindu religion, but as one who has often been moved by the poetic loveliness and the profundity of many of the stories of India's deities, I cannot but protest at your curt and final description of them as 'gods and goddesses who are as hideous as the instincts which created them'. Such statements, read by people at home, who may have no knowledge whatever of India or Indian religion, cannot but give rise to fresh clouds of misunderstanding on the subject of India.....clouds which are certainly the last thing required at the present moment. One can only wonder as to your actual aim in making such statements.

**G.** It was when I began to read your chapter on Indian films that I found myself confronted by one of your prize bits of self-contradiction.....one calculated to muddle considerably (if they happen to read it) the ideas which

the 'Mr and Mrs Smith' of your press meeting lecture may be trying to get clear on the subject of India.....

After having observed in the chapter named nothing less than '*Searchlight on Hinduism*' (from which title one might well await something approaching accuracy of statement) that the Hindu, being permitted by his religion to believe *anything he likes*, has *as a result*, a creed which is a '*hotch-potch of the baser passions*'.....you go on to say (most justly) in your chapter on the cinema that 'the films are a living mirror of a nation's life'.....and then proceed to show us that the almost unbelievably strict Indian moral code does not allow even such a thing as a kiss between cinema hero and heroine! — that one such scene having, some years back, been allowed to creep into a film, the same had caused a veritable uproar '*all over the country*', as well as 'almost a unanimous outcry from the critics'. An incredible reaction for so simple a thing? — Most incredible of all is your own phrase on the subject — 'It may not be true that large numbers of people immediately jumped from high buildings to propitiate the Gods, but it is true that there were angry scenes in theatres, etc. etc...' and you go on to enumerate manifestations of outraged public feeling — 'to propitiate the gods'.....! — those Hindu gods whom, a few pages earlier, you rashly described as 'personifying the baser passions' and as 'representations of almost every vice known to man'.

Poor Mr and Mrs Smith! After they have read this double description of Hindus being: (a) a degenerate race whose very gods are corrupt symbols of base lustfulness, and

(b) a race so strait-laced as to put a taboo even on cinema kisses, on pain of a national uproar should so heinous a sin as the showing of a single one be committed...what are they to think? I hope, for their own sake they will spare themselves all unnecessary headache by concluding that your 'Verdict' is, after all, not to be taken so seriously as they had imagined (when reading your Foreword perhaps).

Through the words of a friend, described by you as 'one of the most knowledgeable men in the Indian film business', you tell us that the Government 'shorts' are 'pretty good'—were you perhaps referring to the Information Films of India?

**H.** As I should be very grieved to hear that you considered this tirade of mine as a mere attempt to 'pick you to pieces', written solely for the love of 'picking', I proffer my next observation as a mere exclamation of surprise and puzzlement, rather than as a further piece of criticism... Though you were definitely put out, and indeed highly indignant, at the way in which the Indian press gathering received your speech to them, alluding in your chapter on the subject, to Mr Horniman's subsequent 'cheap sneers'—and even going so far as to designate your heated audience as an 'ignoble army of saboteurs',—you nevertheless seem almost equally indignant with your Bombay society audience at the lecture in the Taj Mahal Hotel, simply because after your lecture to *them* (one which you yourself describe as 'stinging, personal and insulting..... abuse laid on with a trowel.....hardly able to be made more forcible, even by using the language of a bargee')

you were rewarded only by 'bland smiles.....no red faces, nor angry interjections'. You plainly show as much of disappointment at the subsequent refusal of the press to get angry over your Taj Mahal speech, as you showed of anger over the excited and vehement behaviour of the journalists at the press meeting.

Of the journalists' press meeting outburst you say: 'I was face to face with hatred — mass hatred.....Here was Hindu nationalism naked and unadorned. And, to use a vulgar phrase, it didn't strip well.....' — while for the courteous tolerance of your rudeness shown by the audience at the Taj Mahal Hotel you have only contempt. One is inclined to ask you what sort of behaviour you *would* like from your public.

As for your argument (at least I understood it as such) that there can be no art in Bombay, since the official Bombay guide-book contains no references to art, it might be retorted that possibly the guide-book, rather than the Bombay public, is at fault, in this instance at least. During the time that I have been in Bombay I have seen a considerable number of art exhibitions here, and all received more or less good support from the public.

If it is true, as you say, that the average European in Bombay merely points, with a hearty laugh, to the red light district, when asked where one can see any pictures, one can but lament the coarseness of the average European in Bombay, whilst at the same time wondering what you wish to prove in connexion with art by telling us of this particular instance of his coarseness. But to return to what you say on art itself.....

To mention only two of the most recent painting exhibitions in Bombay which might possibly have interested you I should like to speak of those given by Angelo da Fonseca and Madhav Satwalekar.

Angelo da Fonseca is the name of at least one outstanding Indian painter who, far from being 'a slavish imitator' of either 'the Ajanta frescoes' or 'the Moghul and Rajput schools', is, one might say, a revolutionary in Christian art. Whilst portraying Christs and Maries that can appeal to, and be admired by, Indians of all categories, he gives the lie pretty strongly to your assertion that the only Indian painter whose personages are not definitely either Hindu, or Muslim or Christian in type, is Jamini Roy. You even add that Jamini Roy's freedom from communal barriers in his art is a thing 'quite beyond the comprehension of his contemporaries'. Whilst registering thankfulness that you do at least appreciate Jamini Roy, I think it strange that, as a confirmed Christian (as well as one who has spent over a year in 'an intensive study' of modern Indian art, etc.) you should have completely overlooked so outstanding a figure as Angelo da Fonseca, whose exquisitely human Madonnas, Infant Christs, Magdalens and maidens so entirely Christian in their simplicity and purity of conception, yet so *absolutely Indian* as to be able to stand without clashing, in any Hindu or Muslim setting—would seem like at least one heaven-sent answer to your impassioned search for an outstanding, modern Indian artist of inter-communal style. There is yet another aspect of Angelo da Fonseca's art which ought to be of especial

interest to you.....a series of fine paintings representing points in which Hindu and Christian doctrinal conceptions are identical. One would have almost expected you to write a chapter on him — and, on the contrary, not even a mention. So much for the *intensiveness* of your study of Indian painting.

While Angelo da Fonseca hails from Goa, the brilliant young painter Madhav Satwalekar is a native of Aundh State. His early training at home under his father bore such promising fruit that he was sent not only to the J. J. School of Art in Bombay ( where he completed the school's full course ) but also to Italy's Florence and finally to the Slade School in London. In Italy his master was Professor Bastianini. All these different influences, whilst guiding him in the forming of what is definitely an individual style, and a most marked one at that, have certainly made him anything but a 'slavish imitator' either of 'Ajanta, the Moghul, or Rajput schools', or of the Italian Masters. At the same time, whilst retaining his own originality always, he has made use of vast differences of treatment among the different subjects, according to the atmosphere required. Extremely versatile, his works vary from portraits to still life, from landscapes to architecture, from street scenes to mythology, from studies of peasants to beautiful nudes. Most outstanding of all, perhaps ( though it is hard to choose ), are his portraits, especially the striking one of the Rajasaheb of Aundh. Not only has the artist painted a figure that seems to live before our eyes — even the golden raiment of the Prince seems real, while, the pearls he wears glow with a soft natural lustre most rare in painting. Another

outstanding portrait is the sweet, gentle-featured girl's head entitled simply 'Kalindi'.

The scenes, such as 'Muttra Ghat' and 'Golden Temple of Amritsar', are also remarkable, not only for their fine, bold style and striking manner of presentation, but also for the marvellous way in which the architecture is reflected in the sparkling water — sunlit water, which seems to quiver and scintillate before our very gaze.

Of Satwalekar's crowd and city scenes one must especially note the different manner of treatment according to the place depicted — the gay jostle and bustle of the Italian streets, the broad and flowing grandeur of the 'River Seine, Paris', the almost metallic hardness of the 'Metro St. Michel, Paris' — and the intense air of teeming fertility in the atmosphere of the Indian street scenes.

His nudes are often very lovely indeed and characterized by a chaste simplicity, one might almost say, purity, of tone.

A remarkable painter, a great painter, were he found in *any* land, is young Madhav Satwalekar. And yet you — ah! Beverley, Beverley.....

I do not want to quarrel with you — on the contrary, I only wish to open your eyes a bit. You may think it would be better for me to look to my own defects..... but you have been laying down the law in so definite and dogmatic a manner regarding what people at home (I presume) are to believe on the subject of modern India that I feel it my duty to raise my voice in protest when I find you misleading them in so fantastic a manner as to make me wonder ever more and more what your aim can be.

Whilst heartily endorsing your tribute to the genius of the sculptress Doris Gerrard, I must once again protest, this time at the footnote in which you remark that that same genius is 'completely wasted in India'. Your persistent inconsistency makes one's brain whirl at times — especially when, before we have become accustomed to your vagaries, we conscientiously attempt to follow your reasoning and do our best to take your book as seriously as befits the reading of a 'Verdict'. You have just finished telling and re-telling us that Indian art is dead, that there is no longer even a trace of its former glories remaining...you give us to understand that, as regards the so-called modern Indian 'masters', the least said the better.....and then you observe that a sculptress of genius is completely wasted in an institute like the Bombay J. J. School of Art! If but a tenth part of your bitter criticism of Indian art were true, where could Doris Gerrard's genius find better scope than among Bombay's art students? Surely I do not need to point out that the most suitable spot for the teacher, the leader, the enlightener, the pioneer, is most certainly among the ignorant stumblers in the dark?.....and if the man or woman of genius be not at least one, if not all four, what is the use of genius?

It is during your tirade on Indian art, or rather on India's lack of art, that it suddenly occurs to you that your readers may be growing weary of the general unpleasantness of your remarks. Well, for my part I would mind neither the unpleasantness nor even the aggressiveness of them, if only you would *try* to be a little more consistent.....and had really looked around a bit more before delivering your 'Verdict'.

So much of what you say is really so *bright* that one feels all the more irritated each time you lapse back into your pet habits of self-contradiction and superficial guess-work. I do not say, for instance, that you should describe India as a land overflowing with artistic talent — far from it.....but why must you, in your pronouncements on the subject, swing over to the other extreme limit of the pendulum's arc — and that, too, with such haste as almost to make one think you had made up your mind as to what you were to say before you began your 'intensive study'?

Haste, too, is perhaps to blame for your somewhat contemptuous passage on Shantiniketan and Tagore...and for the amused tone of your acknowledgement of the 'great reputation' enjoyed 'throughout India by anything even vaguely connected' with either. 'Of course,' you patronizingly add, 'if you are among those who think that Tagore was one of the world's greatest geniuses.....etc. etc. etc.' Well, sad enough to relate, it was not until Tagore had been hailed as a genius in Europe that he received anything approaching adequate recognition of his merits in India, and since (if I have grasped anything at all of what you mean) you think India could do nothing better than to allow herself to be guided by the West, especially in matters pertaining to art, what is then wrong in her belated imitation in appreciating Tagore and acclaiming him as a genius ?

Once more, for fear of being grossly misunderstood, let me say that it is not your judgement that I am protesting against but your continual failure to make clear which of two given opinions (on almost every subject) you actually hold.

As for your chapter on Indian music, I find myself speechless, as are, it seems, all those of my acquaintance who have read your book as far as that without losing their patience altogether. One comment only I feel able to proffer, in reply to your amazing assertion that 'Indian music, to most Europeans, is not only quite incomprehensible but actively repulsive.' If, by 'most Europeans' you mean most *cultured* Europeans — (as I suppose you do, since the man who delights in 'Tipperary' is hardly likely to enjoy either Brahms, Bach — or Indian music, would indeed doubtless group the lot of them under the same heading of 'an awful row') I can assure you that you are most certainly wrong in your assumption regarding their reaction to Indian classical music. I could give you many instances to prove you wrong, but I think the following one should suffice.....

Just before the war, a party of musicians and exquisite Chhau dancers from Seraikella State came to Rome in the course of a European tour which was unhappily brought to an end by the political situation. During the fortnight they spent in Rome I witnessed, on several occasions, crowds of the cream of the Roman intelligentsia and Roman society held spellbound by the recitals of Indian classical music given by the chief musicians of the company — a flutist, a sitar player and a tabla accompanist. Though the beautiful dance performances received enthusiastic ovations, it was the evenings of Indian classical music that caused the real furore. Now I think you will surely agree that the cultured public of Rome may well be

said to understand music. In the Roman Opera House, the great Augusteo concert hall and elsewhere in Rome, Romans have the opportunity of hearing not only practically every opera and all the best music ever written in Europe, but also the finest of European singers and musicians—and they take full advantage of that opportunity. It is indeed said that a musician who can satisfy a Roman audience is sure of complete success in the whole world.....yet these people found the Indian musicians of whom I speak above neither 'repulsive' nor 'incomprehensible'—were, in fact, enthralled to the extent of insisting that their stay in Rome should be prolonged, which, however, was not possible. If Indian musicians and music-lovers are indignant today at your comments on Indian music, I shudder to think what the hot-headed Roman enthusiasts would like to do to you—should they chance to read your book. But the best judgement of all, I think, was pronounced by your host the Maharajah who, as you tell us, replied to your comments on Indian music by—a smile!

I have no wish whatsoever to enter into the field of politics, nor is it, I must repeat once more, my aim to question your opinions, but only the seeming unreliability of what you say—if one is to judge by the strange way in which you are prone to flash over to a point of view entirely the opposite of the one you were supporting on the foregoing page. And there is one other thing which, if I may say so, is more than a little repugnant in a book which purports to be an unbiased report of things seen...and that is your blatant antagonism

to the Mahatma. Surely it would have been possible to state your political divergences, to criticize his actions and speeches, to condemn (since that is what you are out to do) his policy from start to finish, with several degrees less of heat, rudeness and venom than you have achieved? Such methods generally prove a hindrance rather than a help to those who make use of them...often ending in provoking a wave of sympathy for the one attacked. Your allusions, for instance, to 'ugly feet' and 'toothless smile', etc. are quite beside the point, and by thus yielding to personal spite you do not help to make your arguments either stronger or clearer, and put yourself, in a certain sense, in the wrong. At this point I am strongly reminded of an article in an aggressively Fascist Roman newspaper, written at the time when Mussolini was doing his best to condition the minds of the Italians in preparation for war against England. The article after having insulted the English in all possible ways, suddenly branched away from politics to remark that all English women were ugly, had flat feet and bad teeth. While trusting that we are not so bad as all *that*, I must add that the whole article fell very flat on account of this outburst of petty spite which seemed to bring the whole grave issue of war down to the level of a children's tiff.

When it is a question of the Mahatma you are never able to keep your temper, and are thereby often led into an unfairness that is really—*awful*, as when, for instance you declare that he has 'bluffed half the world into believing that the tinsel with which *his own hands have crowned himself* is...*a halo of divine radiance*'. (The italics are mine.)

But it is not only with your spite and anger that we have to contend in the matter of Gandhiji.....you lose no time in getting down to your old favourite game of confusing us with contradictory statements. Immediately after declaring that Congress is a hundred per cent Nazi organization because predominantly Brahmin (making clear to us that Brahmins and Nazis have in common the idea of their own racial superiority to all other beings), you instantly go on to say that Congress is under the 'dictatorship' of Gandhiji and 'obeys the slightest crack of his whip'.....which muddles us from the outset, since most of us are aware, I think, that Gandhiji is not a Brahmin. In fact, I believe, you tell us so yourself earlier in your book. You did not muddle *me* by the statement I have just quoted as I had ceased to take you very seriously long before I got to that page—but then I have the advantage of living in India and so was able to brush aside, without further thought, the wilder of some of your remarks which to poor 'Mr and Mrs Smith' may mean many a headache of bewilderment.

(Speaking of 'Mr and Mrs Smith'—there seems to be a veritable campaign against the peace of mind of that unfortunate couple nowadays by writers on the subject of India. In one of last year's issues of the *Daily Mirror* I actually read the following amazing piece of information: 'In India a man with only one wife would be regarded as a crank,' (!)...after reading which, perhaps, Mr Smith may have got hold of an article dealing [with the recent outburst of public indignation in India on account of a *Maharajah's* having dared to take a second wife !.....and

wondered whether he, Mr Smith, or the journalist whose report he was reading had gone mad !)

To return to your statements regarding Gandhiji and his policy, I see you wish us to believe that Gandhiji (a non-Brahmin) has laboured all these years to bring into power a predominantly Brahmin organization (Congress) which if it has its way, will doubtless devote its energies to the re-establishing of Brahmin rule in India. Supposing this aim of the Congress Brahmins to have been unsuspected at first, even by Gandhiji himself—it must surely be plain to him by now, since it has become plain even to you. Why then should he continue to labour on as before? I am not arguing as to the right or the wrong of his so doing, I am merely asking for enlightenment, for, since you tell us that not only is Gandhiji 'a typical Hindu', but even go so far as to add that there are *tens of millions* of Gandhijis in India—I find it most strange to hear that he should be seeking to curtail the rights of himself and his brothers by the re-establishment of Brahmin rule—the very last thing for which those typical brothers (to call them such) are eager.

Now, as regards non-violence—though I have no intention of entering into the question of its advisability or otherwise—(there are too many people, far more competent than I, already doing so and one more opinion would hardly help to solve the problem, anyway)—even there your arguments leave us completely in the dark as to what you really *do* approve. With considerable disdain (or so it would appear, at least, to the reader) you explain

that Gandhiji is *not* the inventor of non-violence, the idea being 'as old as the Hindu hills...part and parcel of the fatalism, the pessimism, the negativism in which the whole Hindu faith is shrouded'.....you might have included the fact, which you surely cannot have forgotten, that non-violence is also as old as Christianity. It would be better for all of us if we tried not to forget this so frequently.

As an example of the corrupting influence of non-violence, you give the case of the Hindu who instead of giving his hard-hearted and obstinate debtor 'a sock on the nose, sits on his doorstep and weeps'. Well, apart from the uselessness of weeping, which of the two courses is nearer to the Christian ideal? I am not out to preach Christianity, being a member of a Church which leaves that work exclusively to priests, but I cannot refrain from asking how so pronounced a Christian as you seem to be, can find fault with one who forbears to strike his enemy? Surely nothing could be more in harmony with the teachings of Christ? If you object to non-violence *in the individual*, you repudiate all the greatest heroes of Christianity, not to speak of Christ himself. What were the early Christian martyrs if not non-violent? Though many of them may have been valiant soldiers in defence of their land, in the case of persecution directed against their own selves as individuals they gave themselves up to the hands of the executioner without a murmur of protest. Christ, though ready to use a scourge against those who corrupted the holiness of the Temple, and who were

thereby striking at the common good— forbade to his friends even *resistance* against the men who later came to lead him to torture and to death. Of course, if one were to enter into a discussion on the subject one might go on for ever — or end in a way certainly not to be described as non-violent. I am only desirous of pointing out that one who is a follower of Christ cannot possibly object to non-violence in the matter of personal wrongs and grievances — much less despise it as you seem to do. If indeed, there be a point on which Christian and Hindu teachings are in almost perfect agreement, it is on the question of non-violence in personal matters. Not very practicable perhaps, from the worldling's point of view, but then, the teachings of Christ seldom are, so that it would be more logical for those who think as you do, to declare themselves to be merely admirers of certain of Christ's sayings and doctrines, rather than as Christians, when actually they accept His teachings only after making such important reservations as cut away the very foundations from under the edifice of the Christian Church.

Of course I fully realize (unless your paradoxical utterances have confused me even *there*) that the sum of your anti-non-violence tirade is your conclusion that non-violence (Gandhiji's non-violence at least) is, in reality, very cunningly masked violence of the most virulent type — that he and his followers are far from being haters of bloodshed...that, on the contrary they are pukka Nazis whose view of an ideal India is but a vision of a Fascist India, etc. etc....but if that was what you wanted to

convey, could you not have done so without beginning by a condemnation of the doctrine of non-violence itself? If the average Hindu is as sincerely and as practically non-violent as you have at first painted him — and, from what I know of him, he is, whether he be a scholar, a merchant or a sweeper\* — and if, as you have taken pains to prove, non-violence, apathy almost, even in the face of the bitterest insult, is the very keynote to the Hindu character, what are we to think when, on the pages immediately following such assertions you proceed to describe Hindus as the most violent and blood-thirsty anarchists? If they are indeed so complex they are different from all other peoples in the world — and your description cannot stop where it does. You propound a fascinating mystery and leave us guessing as to the solution. This is especially provoking inasmuch as though you leave your readers completely in the dark, there is no darkness in your own mind. On the subject of India...on almost every subject even remotely connected with India...your mind seems to be completely and finally made up (you have, indeed, delivered a '*Verdict*') — so why not make things clear to us, too? — particularly as your book must have been written for the purpose of enlightening us...If it is not even

\*If, by my generalization and my lumping together of the various castes, I offend my Hindu friends, I am sorry, but there is nothing I can do to atone — the question of caste being as idiotic and exasperating to me as the so-called 'problems' of class and of race in Europe have ever been. In fact, so detestable to me are all *three* categories (i. e. class race and caste), that I lump *them* together too, wherever I come across them, and relegate them, without any loss of time or thought, to my mental waste-paper basket.

*intended to do that what is it supposed to do?*

As for Pakistan, you are naturally as entitled to hold your own views on *that* as on anything else in India and elsewhere—and there would be no sense or point in my disagreeing with anything you say, so long as you stuck to views, but as I have been at great pains to point out, you *don't*. You persistently tell us that things are so or so—and then, with the next dip of your pen into the ink, tell us that they are exactly the opposite. Even *that* would not be so aggravating (not to say bewildering) if it were not the very vice that, above all others, you condemn—especially, of course, in the Mahatma, as has already been said more than once. In one passage you say that by looking up the files of his past speeches Gandhiji can manage to prove that he has said almost *anything*.....well, I shudder to think of what *your* files will be like by the time you reach the Mahatma's age!—But to return to Pakistan:

While you undoubtedly seem to have deep sympathy with Mr Jinnah's dream of a divided India, you appear to have hardly patience even with the Mahatma's dream of unity—but of course that may only be due to personal antipathy, and, in any case, your lack of patience in *this* regard is by no means unique (strange as that may be), so that it arouses neither surprise nor any other feeling in particular in the reader. That alone which calls for sharp comment in your book is—let me say it once more—your really masterly (absolutely super) talent for self-contradiction, unequalled by anything of its kind that I have ever heard or read. (Most striking of all is, naturally,

the *title* of the book. If 'verdicts' were all as ambiguous as yours, I don't think a judicial sentence could ever be passed — nor a case dismissed either.)

I repeat, I have no wish to challenge the views you hold on Pakistan (or on anything else for that matter) — but again I must question the clarity of your sources of information. I really do not think you are justified in saying that India's *hundred million Muslims* can be swayed by Mr Jinnah whichever way he wishes, or that anything like that number of Muslims belong to the Muslim League. Whether they ought or ought not to belong to it is quite beside the point — but *do* they? If they do not, then it is no good reading your 'Dialogue with a Giant' (Mr Jinnah) chapter at all, which is a pity, as Pakistan seems to be your favourite Indian subject.

Almost from the outset you appear to have gathered from Mr Jinnah's discourse, and to have been impressed by, the importance of such things as food, names and *clothes* when stressing the vast differences between Hindus and Muslims — and we, too, might have been impressed by this same importance, if you had not just informed us that Mr Jinnah (even in the hottest weather!) wears a stiff white collar and a monocle on a grey silk cord, and generally described him as a typical Londoner of the 'old school'. One at once switches over to the idea that dress (to the Muslims at least) can't be *that* important, if the *leader* of India's Muslims has broken away (and been allowed to break away) to *that* extent. Didn't you wonder at it yourself?

On second thoughts perhaps it will be as well to read

your 'Dialogue with a Giant' carefully, since Mr Jinnah appears to have taken you very seriously—whatever *we* may feel tempted to do.....he actually granted you an interview of three hours !

x                  x                  x                  x

Yes, there are things in that chapter that we should have been very sorry to have missed. Just listen to this!— You say of yourself that, while Mr Jinnah was out of the room—'.....I realized that something very remarkable was happening.....I was not losing my temper.' The sincerity of this reflection on your lack of self-control, during the period of your survey of India up to this point, is so absolutely grand that, for the present at least, I am silent with admiration.

x                  x                  x                  x

It was from your talk with Mr Jinnah, I think, that you came to the conclusion that the dream of a united, compact and enduring Indian Empire was more or less nonsense.....it was Mr Jinnah, the leader of the 'hundred million Muslims' who made this clear to you.....yet in another chapter you tell us that the Muslims (that whole *hundred million*, you are careful to state), being the only race, apart from the British, who have ever succeeded in establishing a great Indian Empire, want it back ! Really ! (Poor Mr and Mrs Smith !)

If you had said that the Muslims themselves were divided in many ways, some wanting this and some wanting that (whether such actually be the case or not) we should at least have been able to gather *something*

( whether correct or incorrect ) — but as you have given us to understand that the Indian Muslims are a compact, united body ( one hundred million strong ) with but *one* thought, *one* aim and *one* leader — how is it that they continue to go on dreaming ( all of them ) of that which their leader has declared to be an impossibility ?

If you mean your ‘Verdict’ ( as some of us imagine that you do ) to become a standard textbook for students of Indian matters, it would be advisable for you to compile an appendix of annotations explaining the meaning hidden ( perhaps ) in practically every sentence — but definitely *hidden* !

I have not even faintly begun to understand why you are so antagonistic to the idea of a *united* India — for, though you may not actually say so, I cannot help feeling sure that you are. Whether it be possible or not to achieve Indian unity within, let us say, the next hundred years, may be a big question — but we surely can feel sympathy with any Indian who cherishes such a dream. Well, supposing that we *are* sympathetic and wish to help to stamp out for ever the ugly blot of Hindu-Muslim animosity — what better beginning could our labours, or the labours of any unity-seeking Indian, have than the establishing of a common language ! Without that indeed, as a first step, all other striving for unity would be mere waste of time. I have learnt, time and again, by experience, that nothing on earth — neither race, colour, religion, love, pity, nor anything else, can ever be so close and lasting a bond as a common language — this I have seen

especially among Indians in Europe. Wherever there were Indians they would gather together, of whatever caste or community, forgetful of all the religious and political differences that may have troubled them at home—desirous only of pouring out their homesickness in the familiar Hindustani. It was never English that they talked, by the way, though most of them were fluent in it...nor the languages of the countries in which they happened to be staying, though they were often proficient in those too. Indeed, this power that a common language has to unite men is surely so self-evident that I fear to insult your intelligence by the merest hint that perhaps you might not have been already well aware of it. Since then we are doubtless in agreement on this point, how is it that you display such evident disgust with Gandhiji's plan of establishing Hindustani as a common language? Even without thereby achieving unity, what greater service could he render to his fellow-countrymen than by giving them the finest of all helps in trading, co-operating and generally 'getting together'? Yet you speak as if he were a sadist, inflicting cruel tortures on innocent children! Difficult? — Of course it would be, damnably difficult! Was it perhaps *easy* for Ataturk to bring literacy to his millions of illiterate Turks — even to the very oldest men and women in the villages? — and that, too, within the space of a few short years! As for the respective claims of the Persian (Urdu) and Nagari (Hindi) scripts, since it is certainly not possible for *both* to become the common alphabet, which of the two would one more naturally select for common diffusion if not the one already familiar to the

overwhelming majority? Opposition?—Of course there would be opposition, just such as Ataturk had to face when abolishing the old Persian script in Turkey, but he managed it. No one today, seeing the fruits of Ataturk's marvellous work, accuses him of obstinacy or cruelty in forcing the benefits of literacy on his people—least of all the Turks themselves, though there were enough of them ready to do so when the tremendous struggle began.....a struggle hard enough to make a lesser man give up at the outset. Those who wish to see India united not only by a common language, but a common literacy as well, are doubtless able to visualize at least a good part of the difficulties that lie before them—but since there *is* no *easy* way of achieving what *must* be the first step if India is to have her just share in the prosperity promised (after the war) to all peoples, what else can they do save bravely forge ahead? Even if Pakistan were to come to pass, a common language would be a surer means of fostering peace between Hindus and Muslims than any other bond, either artificially created or naturally inherited.

Before closing my letter to you, dear Beverley, I should like to mention a few more things that have either puzzled or irritated me whilst perusing your otherwise quite entertaining 'Verdict', so that I can enjoy the satisfied feeling of really having 'had it out' with you to the full. I hope you won't mind.

1. To go back once again to the burning animosity which you cherish towards the Mahatma — you may dislike him personally (though I don't think you have met him,

have you?)—you may disapprove of, and detest, his policy—you may even think of him as a deluded and dangerous visionary.....but you needn't be so frightfully unfair. You declare, as firmly as if it were an established fact, that those liberals who were expelled from Congress, 'because their policy differed from Gandhiji's', were not shot (by Congress) *only because British law still rules India!* Having previously told us that 'Congress obeys the slightest crack of Gandhiji's whip', one must naturally conclude that had he been able to have his way, nothing would have prevented Gandhiji from shooting his former friends! Well, I think that assumption too rash to be swallowed by anyone except your ever rash self. For *their* part, 'Mr and Mrs Smith' will probably wonder if they (or you) have got the names mixed when, after reading that one of the men whom Gandhiji wishes he had been able to shoot is C. Rajagopalachari, they piteously turn back the pages till they come to the previous one on which you told them that C. Rajagopalachari *is* (not *was*, mind) one of Gandhiji's closest friends!

2. To protest that India *can never* become a united nation because, roughly and broadly speaking, 'Indians' are composed of *two* nations, the Hindus and the Muslims, is about as funny as if, looking back from the bulwarks of our splendid unity, we overheard the dim echoes of a voice protesting, centuries ago, that the British could never really become a *nation* because composed of Normans and Saxons—who were certainly as different from each other in language, customs, manners and culture as are the Hindus

from the Muslims today. If they had not the bitter religious feud which presents so great a difficulty in India, there was the surely equally bitter barrier which separates a conquered people from the invader. I do not think I shall be considered mistaken when I say that it is just that fusion of two utterly different peoples that makes us the great nation we are, though, in the beginning the idea may have seemed about as feasible as a plan to blend oil with water. And in attempting Hindu-Muslim unity far less is aimed at than was so magnificently achieved in Britain, since it is not here a question of an intermingling and fusing of two different races (to call them such), but merely a project to so regulate the life of the two communities as to ensure that each may prosper in peace, and in satisfaction with its lot. You may dislike, or even mistrust, the means by which Congress proposes to set about the task, but you surely cannot condemn the *idea itself!*—And yet that is precisely what you *do* do! And then, on top of it, you actually have the cheek to call *another* (Gandhiji, of course, he being your favourite scapegoat) *muddle-headed!*

As regards the problem as to what actually constitutes a *nation*, and what elements are indispensable to the forming of one, though there is much truth in what you have quoted from Renan, I think the following brief definition by Struthers Burt as fine as anything yet written and second to none in its informative value to those seeking to solve twentieth-century problems with the white-hot rapidity which twentieth-century conditions demand :

‘A nation is one thing only; it’s an idea. A nation

is what the men and women who belong to it want; and what, if necessary, they are willing to die for.'

Common memories, 'common glories in the past', are not conceptions which trouble, or carry much, weight, with the illiterate masses. *A square deal*, in *practice*, is sure of a far warmer and swifter response from them than is, say, an appeal to pride in past history of which they may be entirely ignorant. When India is given her promised post-war independence, I think the problems of achieving unity are by no means so insuperable as you suppose — provided whatever form of government holds the reins is intelligent enough to offer the Indian masses that same 'square deal'. In Russia today, the individual cares little, in his contentment with his own personal conditions, about the wide racial, religious and other differences distinguishing the various units of the U. S. S. R.

I am not, of course, presuming to prophesy that the Indian masses may safely hope for fair and just treatment from whatever form of government may come into power in India after the war — I am merely pointing out that with honest men at the helm (and surely these may be available in India as much as anywhere else), together with proper provision for the wants of all parties, neither racial, religious, nor any other such divisions need form insuperable barriers ..... more especially *if once a common means of linguistic communication has been established.*

3. Your habit of exaggeration, too, is really most annoying, as, for instance, when you offer as sole alternative to the (as you tell us) much criticized opulence and splen-

dour of the viceregal dwelling, the picture of a little villa, with a 'stuffy hall' and 'a rumbling' (whatever *that* may mean) 'house-parlour maid'!—and protest that *such* a drastic change of affairs would be impossible. It would, of course, but—what a foolish argument!

Then in your description of the press meeting, you tell us that you entered a room 'packed from floor to ceiling with journalists', who, among other eccentric actions 'twined themselves round your knees'! Whatever impression you may have *wished* to convey is defeated by the utterly fantastic character of your description. I especially point out these wide divergences from actual fact as they do you very great harm, Beverley, causing many people (after they have once come across a few of them in your books) to take your remarks in general about as seriously as they would take the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood'. In fact you must have noticed this yourself since you tell us that during the many meetings you addressed while in India, 'nobody showed any desire to listen from the first moment'! And if *that* didn't teach you a lesson, it certainly *ought* to have done.

4. You remark sadly that, while you were ill in hospital, though members of most of the principal sects and communities of India dropped in for a chat with you, there was never an 'Indian' among them. By which, judging from your arguments at the beginning of the book, I presume you mean that none of those who think of India as a political, geographical and racial *unit* put in an appearance. Well, considering your militant antagonism to even the very thought

of an India thus united — an antagonism which you seem to have made no effort to conceal whilst here — is it to be wondered at ?

5. You wax very scornful over Pearl Buck and others for speaking of the 'Indian people', protesting that one cannot thus sum up as a racial whole so varied a collection of types as 'a Gond aboriginal, a Bombay boxwallah, a Punjab chaprasi, a Madras lawyer, a Travancore untouchable, a Sikh warrior, a Pathan moneylender, Mr Gandhi and His Highness the Aga Khan'. You even designate as 'absurd' any attempt to present such a mixture as the 'Indian people'. May one ask of what, in your eyes, a 'people' actually *does* consist? Your argument against Pearl Buck's definition might be used against a similar definition of any nation under the sun. Or would you deny that a British peer, a Labour member, a cockney coal-heaver, a provincial waitress, a Devonshire dairyman, a London revue star (complete with tights and a feathered hat), a classical ballet dancer and a Sister of Mercy have but few, if any, points in common? Yet you do, I suppose, admit that it is of such widely different types, together with countless others just as different, that the British Nation is formed — that British nation that has, in this war, shown a spirit of comradeship and co-operation among its members that is unsurpassed by anything history can show us. Or are your ideas vague even about England?

6. As regards some of your unfavourable remarks on Indians, I should like to point out that they are often of a nature likely to spread entirely wrong ideas. When you

speak of the 'thousands of young men' who 'flocking to the army centres' are there taught 'for the first time in their lives'—'rudiments of hygiene'.....you conjure up a picture of unwashed savages that is very far from the truth. In no other country in the world, I think, if one studied the lives of the masses, would one find a higher percentage of persons taking their daily bath and their daily cleaning of teeth as a matter of course, even under the most difficult circumstances. It would be well if many European nations copied Indians in this.

7. I must admit that your book draws me even while it irritates, so that against my will, I am led to peruse ever further. Even merely to glance through its pages causes me to overflow with queries I should like to put to you, as to why you say this or that, what you can possibly mean by such and such a statement, etc.....so much so that I fear my letter is becoming unpardonably long, but bear with me yet a little longer.

Your slashing attack on Hinduism is one of the things which I find most extraordinary (among the many amazing attacks you have made). You yourself admit that before beginning to discuss it, it is necessary to know clearly 'what Hinduism really is'. I quite agree with you and really wish that you had followed your own excellent advice—not, I repeat, because I have any personal spiritual leanings towards Hinduism, but because it is necessary that people should at least be well acquainted with each other's beliefs if they are to co-operate to any large extent, in building a happier world.....and I am

really afraid that your book will not help much in *that* direction. There are plenty of Christian missionaries here in India making the Christian viewpoint clear to Indians, but few, if any, Hindu messengers (or ambassadors, if you prefer the word) doing the same in England. (I am not here in any way concerned with the question of conversion.) If my Hindu friends think that an explanation, to *us*, of *their* beliefs (that *we* might in our turn, become the better acquainted with *them*) be not in any way needful, or even potentially beneficial, I beg to differ. You, Beverley, might have helped the cause of world peace and mutual understanding considerably, if you had gone a little deeper into the subject, instead of merely flitting here and there (as it is all too plain that you must have done), guessing at things and then indulging in such unpardonable and painful flippancies as, for example, your allusion to Hinduism as 'The Religion of the Red Light'. While Mr and Mrs Smith (among others) would certainly be benefitted by being given an insight into the Hindu mind, I fail to see *what* you hoped to achieve by giving them instead the sort of thing I have just quoted.

When you declare that your attack on the Hindu religion is definitely *not* an attack on the Hindu *people*, I cannot agree with you, since, after defining their beliefs as obscene, you give us to understand that they themselves have invented and fostered that same obscenity.....  
.....'The Hindu can believe almost anything he likes, with the result that his religion has become a hotch-potch of the baser passions.....hideous as the instincts which

created them.' Now, if that is not an attack on the believers as well as on the beliefs, what, under the sun can ever be designated as an attack?

Before me on the table lies a book of Hindu verse, and lines in praise of Lord Shiva spring to my eyes as I glance.....

'Protection, promised in hand uplifted.....

His face alight with divinest compassion.....

While this white God hath His abode in thee,

O heart! what fear can assail thee?'

These lines are typical of sacred Hindu verse, but there is certainly no place for such lines in the Hindu religion that *you* have described. Whatever our personal sentiments, is it not always better to speak impartially especially when delivering a 'Verdict' on the religion of hundreds of millions of our fellow-creatures?

8. As for Hindu architecture, the impression you convey there, too, is coloured entirely by your own prejudices (and is also far from giving the reader anything like correct information). Since a description of Bombay (ugly, certainly, as are most modern cities) has no part to play in a discourse on 'Hindu architecture', we must fall back, for our information, on your condemnation of a temple you visited — 'reputed to be of great beauty' and turning out to be 'devoid of any architectural interest and.....only notable for the astonishing obscenity' of its carvings. All that may well be, but do you mean the foregoing as a final judgement on 'Hindu architecture'? If so, one is inevitably led to the conclusion that your study of Hindu architecture was as

sketchy as the rest of your Indian art studies. It is all nothing to do with me, you may say, but I think that you and I, and others, who have had the chance to see all these things, have no right to speak as oracles on such subjects to poor, eagerly waiting Mr and Mrs Smith unless we have used our eyes to some advantage whilst here.

9. As I said some way back in this letter, I don't suppose you want people to look upon your book as light reading for idle hours. You surely must have intended us to gain knowledge and insight by our study of it. Well, what, save a bad headache, is to be gained from reading contradictory information like the following?

- a. Congress is predominantly Brahmin.
- b. Brahmins, like the Nazis, consider themselves superior to *all* other beings (not merely to the Untouchables) so much so that each one of them is, in his own and his fellow-Brahmins' estimation, 'God on earth'.
- c. Congress is entirely controlled by Gandhiji, a non-Brahmin. He is, in fact, its 'dictator'.
- d. Congress has not the slightest intention of improving the bitter lot of the Untouchables.
- e. Gandhiji himself has done nothing to improve the position of the Untouchables.
- f. Gandhiji, the 'dictator' of the Congress, has set an example in the matter of fraternizing with Untouchables by, among other things, living together with Untouchables, adopting an Untouchable child and declaring that he would rather Hinduism die than Untouchability live.

g. As if this were not startling enough, in the face of what you have already said to the contrary, you inform us casually that C. Rajagopalachari, Brahmin and former Congress President (?), went to the length of ordering a government official to lead a group of Untouchables into the Madura temple as a protest against the cruel, centuries-old custom of barring the temples to the Harijans. You add the information that this bold step was taken in defiance of the 'great majority' of Madura Brahmins who, since that time have refused to set foot in the temple. So that whether C. Rajagopalachari achieved much by his action or not, we cannot deny that he, *Congress ex-President (?) Brahmin* (and all that that implies) made the boldest of bids for the abolition of a cruel prejudice (an abolition which you say elsewhere is 'far from the minds of Congress leaders').

h. Nor do you give us to understand that Gandhiji and C. Rajagopalachari are alone in their crusade against the evil doctrine of Untouchability, since you follow up with the glowing example of Pandit Malaviya's indomitable war against the same hideous doctrine and indeed speak with high praise of his efforts in that field.....yet you still persist in saying that the Congress has no intention of changing the Harijan lot !

If the example set by Gandhiji, Rajagopalachari and Pandit Malaviya may not be taken as indicative of the general trend of the Congress mind, by what are we to judge, or guess at, what the intentions of Congress may be? That any of the above statements made by you *may* be true, but that they cannot *all* be true—is the conclusion

to which even the dullest brain must come. Surely when the whole weird collection is thus placed *en masse* before you, you must feel a bit confused yourself. If you are in good faith the blame must once more lie with that unwise tendency of yours to believe lightly any of the many chance silly remarks that you may have heard whilst in India.

10. Then, as regards those Indian 'cub reporters', who if they were a bit rough with you, have, in their turn received pretty harsh treatment, you ask why they offer 'such an unquestioning allegiance to Mr Gandhi' since many of them have 'no religion at all'? You imply that by so asking you place them in a nasty hole, as they do not know what to say. I myself do not see why they should say anything as I find your question quite irrelevant. Why should the personal religious beliefs of any political leader trouble those who follow his political guidance, or determine whether they should follow him or not? At present, Mr Churchill enjoys almost unanimous following in England though those who are trusting him to 'see them through' safely may be Roman Catholics, Protestants, Methodists, Quakers, Plymouth Brothers—or even England's several thousand Muslims. They are not concerned with Mr Churchill's private beliefs or philosophies any more than those who wish to see India united in brotherhood care whether Gandhiji be a Hindu or a Muslim, a Sikh or a Parsee, unless they happen to be of his faith which must, naturally, afford them an extra personal satisfaction. The fact that so many non-religious, or differently religious, young men follow his lead unquestion-

ingly — once they have decided that they, too, desire to see an India united, is a glowing proof of the way in which, despite all that you say to the contrary, India is casting off the shackles of communal narrowness that have fettered her for so long.

11. On the subject of literacy, your way of presenting things is extremely misleading. Knowing as you must do the ignorance of most people on Indian matters and statistics you seek to touch our hearts (at the expense of what you contemptuously dub 'Gandhi's soulful proclamations') by telling us that in spite of the 'much vaunted' steps that have been taken to emancipate and educate the Untouchables, only 'five hundred of them in a country with a population of nearly 400 millions!' — (the exclamation mark is yours) — have managed to obtain university degrees. Pretty rough on the Untouchables, certainly, but not, comparatively speaking, half so rough as Mr and Mrs Smith might at first have supposed, if they will turn over a few pages until they come to the one on which you say that India has a total of 340 millions of illiterates. So, as you see, if we are to take your statistics as being correct, we cannot say that in the matter of *literacy* the Untouchables, all things considered, have come off too badly when compared with the other groups of Indian people. I do not wish to prove anything by this argument, but I do suggest that if these two passages are meant to be informative, they should have been placed side by side. If Gandhiji, or anyone else, says that much has been done of late to educate the Untouchables, we cannot possibly disagree with

him, if we look at India as a whole. The trouble at the root of the matter, I fear, is that once Gandhiji has pronounced on a subject you feel it your bounden duty to disagree, even at the expense of whatever claims to common-sense you may still have.

12. Since the Hindu-Muslim question plays so important and ever-recurring a part in your book, one can hardly think of the latter without the former and thus I too have been constantly led back to it during the writing of this letter.

As if you had not confused your readers enough by the contradictory statements on Hindus and Muslims which I have already enumerated, there comes to my mind yet another phrase which leaves your general information on the subject even more vague. Though you have said a good deal about India's 'hundred million Muslims' and their unanimous desire for Pakistan—as well as their unanimous determination to get it, and have sympathized with them so whole-heartedly that one might almost be led to conclude it was our clear duty to give it to them without delay, you yet admit that the majority of your 'stream' of Muslim visitors were not very clear as to what Pakistan was ! *If such be the case*, would not the conceding of Pakistan be a somewhat unwise move? I personally think the Muslims neither so unanimous, nor so ignorant, as you would have us believe, but, if you happen to be right, surely Britain does very well to exercise a little of her customary prudence ?

You do not seem to notice how your statements re-

garding Muslim unanimity are annulled by (to mention only one instance) your page about Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his followers. Then, too, instead of generously (and quite reasonably) supposing that his Red Shirts may follow their leader out of voluntary enthusiasm, you declare that he has 'imposed his convictions' upon them, though at the same time you admit that he is a 'devotee of non-violence'! Then to crown all, instead of remembering that he and his party are at least *one* clear proof that *all* Muslims do *not* want Pakistan, and sparing a little time to make all this plain both to yourself and to us, you sweep him out of the picture as (in addition to all the rest) being 'of Fascist tendencies', and turn to his brother. Your objections to the latter would not interest or trouble us greatly if it were not for the fact that after scolding on for the better part of a page about the things he said to you (and telling us that you actually got a high temperature in consequence!) we find that you have nothing worse to accuse him of than — *inconsistency in his arguments!*

Ah, *Beverley!* — I might have reminded you of the old proverb connected with pots and kettles, if I were not sure that Mr and Mrs Smith must already have saved me the trouble. In fact the more I think of it, the more I begin to feel sure that someone or other among your closer friends must certainly have affectionately brought home to you much of what I have been trying to make clear. However that may be, you have remarked that 'men must express themselves, in one way or another, by pen, plough or pistol; otherwise they perish', so since you have so evidently great a need

for self-expression (I judge by the long list of book-titles given on the fly-leaf of your 'Verdict') and have yourself indicated that there are other ways of getting relief than that which you have chosen, don't you think it would be better to change over to one of them while you yet enjoy youth's elastic adaptability to new things?

With every good wish for success in whatever line you may take up.

Yours very sincerely  
Gertrude Murray







11839

